4

20: Hart E-5 (1951) 1954 OA1 Philippines
Central Bisayan OA14

Siaton Schools During the Spanish Period

Prior to 1863 there was no systematic educational structure or administration in the Philippines. "The government did not have any agency for the control and supervision of the schools. Each school was left to its own devices--to choose its teachers, to adopt its curriculum, to administer its own affairs according to the desire of the founders.[104] The royal decree of 1863 extended to the Philippines a school system originally developed for Cuba and provided for "incomplete" primary schools in each barrio of 500 persons or less. The supervision of local schools was given to the parish priests. Two years later the organization of secondary schools, one in each province, was also decreed.[105]

There had been a school, for boys and girls, in Siaton for several decades before 1890 but the Cadiane manuscript does not go into detail. In 1891, however, Baldomores Torres, the Guardia Civil commandant, decided

---

[104] "The parish priest, as ex-officio supervisor, had the following functions: to visit the schools, to admonish erring teachers or to suspend them, to encourage attendance of pupils, to certify whether a child should be admitted to the school, free of charge or not, to recommend to the provincial inspector any needed improvement of the school, and to supervise the teaching of religion and morals." Isidro Antonio, The Philippine Educational System. 2nd ed. Manila, Bookman, Inc., 1949, pp. 9-10.

[105] Katherine M. Cook, Public Education in the Philippine Islands, Bulletin 1935, No. 9, Washington, D. C. U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, 1935, p. 22.

to build a new school in the poblacion. He told the people to collect the materials for the building and selected the plaza as the site. The parish priest, Jorje Carcabilla, objected to the erection of the school on land that belonged to the church.

A bitter struggle between the two leaders followed. The quarrel over the school was secondary; the root of the disagreement was the conflict between the parish priest and the commandant over the management of local affairs and the accession of heirs of the Spanish throne. The political rivalries of Spain were carried to the Philippines. Carcabilla was a supporter of the Carlista party and Torres of the Isabelina party who were then quarreling over the accession rights of Isabel and Carlos, King Ferdinand's children.

Cadiane describes the priest as "cruel, like a soldier," but he is an obvious admirer of Torres. The priest emerged victorious in this dispute and classes continued to be held in the old school building. This victory of the parish priest over the commandant of the Guardia Civil indicates the power the priests then wielded in the Philippines.

Zaide writes that the average parish priest during the Spanish period was "virtual ruler of the town."[106]

---

[106] Zaide, The Philippines Since the British Invasion, p. 163.

175*
554
624
793

There was hardly a branch of the local government to which the influence of the priest did not extend, directly or indirectly. He was the inspector of primary schools, the town censor, honorary president of all local government committees, a member of the town council, assisted in choosing the local officers (technically without a vote), signed all certificates of election, participated in decisions to build public works, and even had the authority to decide at what hour the town council would assemble.[107] The priests of Siaton parish were not atypical.

175*
872

Cadiane writes of the schooling he received in Siaton poblacion during the latter part of the 19th century.

> Here was the real study. There were many students. You were given three days to learn a lesson. If you did not learn your lesson you were told to lie on your stomach on a bench and you were whipped three times. If you were absent from class the number of days you were absent was doubled and you were whipped this many times.

A great deal of time appears to have been spent in studying Spanish.

> If you did not speak Spanish in the class and outside in the yard we were in danger of being punished if someone reported us. If we were discovered or reported not speaking Spanish we were whipped six times, [i.e., given six lashes]. We had a Spanish

---

[107] Report of the Philippine Commission to the President. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, I, 1900, pp. 57-8. This report is often called the "Schurman Report" after the head of the Commission, Jacob Gould Schurman. Hereafter cited as Philippine Commission Report, I, 1900.

grammar translated into Visayan and also a big Spanish-Visayan dictionary. If you asked your teacher questions while the class was in session he might pull your ears or scold you. If you failed to answer questions on the lesson given you in the morning that afternoon you were given five lashes.[108] 175* 872

The school was mainly for the sons of the better-to-do Filipino who lived in the poblacion. Children from the nearby barrios rarely attended this school. [565]

THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTIONS AND THE REPUBLIC OF NEGROS

In 1856 Negros was raised to the status of a military-political province; in 1890 it was divided into the provinces of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental. In 1887 Negros' population was estimated to be 270,891, an increase of more than 65,000 in ten years.[109] Cadiane mentions this administrative division of Negros and reports that a "military government was organized at Dumaguete under Governor Joaquin Tavira."[110] Negros' new provinces were still classified as corregimientos (military provinces) and governed by army officers. 175* 635 [161]

---

[108] The stress on teaching Spanish in Siaton is interesting since this was not typical of most of the schools during the Spanish period. In 1885 a Franciscan friar wrote a pamphlet which ridiculed the Filipinos' efforts to learn Spanish and stated: "All a Filipino needed to enable him to go to heaven was to learn how to pray, to plow, and to be obedient to his superiors, especially to the parish priests." Encarnacion Alzona, A History of Education in the Philippines: 1565-1930. Manila, University of the Philippines Press, 1932, pp. 96-7.

[109] Galang and Osias, op. cit., pp. 405-6. In 1893 Echauz states Negros had a population of 320,606 with 42 towns and that the number of Recollect priests in the island had increased to 47. Echauz, op. cit., p. 37.

[110] This statement is from Cadiane's manuscript and is supported by Pedro Teves, "Una Breve Historia de Dumaguete," The Official Progress of Dumaguete City. Dumaguete, Negros Oriental, November 24, 1948, p. 46.

The entire community is active at this time. School attendance drops sharply during the transplanting season, for the children must help. The paddies are dotted with busy men, women and children; the women wrap their heads with cloths for protection against the hot sun. Young children scurry across the paddies carrying baskets full of seedlings. The chocolate-colored paddies soon change to a pale green over which later the maya birds swoop in squadron-like maneuvers. 243 [872]

Although in 1951 transplanting activities in Caticugan continued for more than a month, they began abruptly. The barriofolk wait for someone else to begin; when the first farmer starts to transplant all the others follow his lead. They believe it is best for all to transplant at the same time so that the damage to the paddies by insects and birds will be distributed equally. If a person planted his paddy several weeks earlier than the rest, his rice would be growing when the other paddies were bare or only newly transplanted. Insects and birds would concentrate on his paddies instead of having such damage spread evenly among all the paddies. [183]

This attitude is one reason why the Macan Sta. Rosa variety is planted so widely. The people of Barrio Caticugan do not like to interplant with Macan Sta. Rosa earlier maturing varieties. In the past older residents of Barrio Caticugan said many rice varieties with different maturity

been living as common-law couples, to baptize and confess the unbaptized and unconfessed, rarely reach as many people in the more isolated barrios as in Caticugan. At least, in one specific case the mission was partly responsible for abandonment of the dulot by a Naga family.

Children of Caticugan can more readily get a formal education than the children of Casala-an or Apoloy. In these northern communities the parents who wish a complete elementary education for their children must make arrangements to room and board them in the poblacion. For the children of Caticugan school is only a short walk from home. The young people of Caticugan have greater access to newspapers and magazines, to the poblacion reading center, and the radio, than the youngfolk of the northern barrios where illiteracy is prevalent.

The barriofolk, particularly the younger generation, are very sensitive about being called "country hicks" by their more sophisticated poblacion friends. For example, one reason why most young people of Caticugan dislike abaca clothing is that the homewoven material is a symbol of a rustic. To the better educated residents of the poblacion the dulot is a "pagan practice" and most of them have no scruples about ridiculing those who practice it. As a result many of the barriofolk are ashamed of the dulot yet not convinced that it is safe to abandon it. Stories of those who have stopped the dulot without any serious consequences are matched by tales of persons who have fallen ill for the same reason.